

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4259
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C O N F I D E N T I A L CONAKRY 0818

STADIS////////////////

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: SHUM, SREF, GV
SUBJECT: RETURN OF GUINEAN EXILES

REF: CONAKRY 760

1. DURING LAST THREE MONTHS GUINEAN EXILES HAVE BEGUN RETURNING TO GUINEA IN SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS. MOST ARE PETTY TRADESMAN FROM HUMBLER STRATA OF POPULATION MOST NOTICEABLE INFLOW AS MEN FROM CONAKRY HAS BEEN FROM SIERRA LEONE; ALMOST ALL RETURNEES ARE FOULAHS (PEULH). THEY HAVE BEEN ATTRACTED BACK NOT SO MUCH BY PRESIDENT SEKOU TOURE'S AMNESTY OF JULY 1977 AS BY GOG'S MORE RELAXED ATTITUDE (IN PRACTICE AT LEAST) TOWARD PETTY MARKET TRADING WHICH TOURE HAS CONDONED AS MEANS OF APPEASING DISSATISFACTION OVER SCARCITY OF CONSUMER GOODS THAT GAVE RISE TO AUGUST 1977 MARKET RIOTS. MOST FOULAH RETURNEES HAVE COME BACK TO "TEST THE WATER", VISIT RELATIVES, BRING IN CARS, AND PROFIT FROM EASING OF BORDER AND IMPORT CONTROLS, LACK OF ROADBLOCK SHAKEDOWNS,
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AND ABSENCE OF ECONOMIC POLICE HARASSMENT. THEY HAVE TENDED TO OPEN STALLS OR PEDDLE GOODS, MOVING INTO CONAKRY, THEN TO MAMOU, DALABA, PITA, LABE, OR EVEN BEYOND FOUTA DJALLON HOMEGROUND. THERE ARE NO STATISTICS AVAILABLE TO QUANTIFY THIS MOVEMENT, AND IT IS HARD TO SEPARATE FLOATING ITINERANTS FROM NEW PERMANENT RESIDENTS. BASED ON NUMEROUS EMBASSY SOURCES AMONG LOCAL

FOULAH AND SIERRA LEONIAN COMMUNITIES, PLYS OBSERVED ROAD TRAFFIC -- AUTHOS AND TRUCKS LADEN WITH PERSONAL HOUSEHOLD GOODS -- IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT AT LEAST 5000 INDIVIDUALS, PROBABLY MORE, HAVE BEEN INVOLVED. SIMULTANEOUSLY, WESTERN AIRLINE REPRESENTATIVES REPORT INCREASE IN NUMBER OF AIR ARRIVALS OF HANDFULS OF MOSTLY YOUNG GUINEANS, SOME FROM WESTERN EUROPE, ALTHOUGH MOST OF THESE PROBABLY ALSO FALL IN "TESTING-THE-WATER" CATEGORY. INTEREST AMONG WEALTHY GUINEANS ABROAD, SOME POTENTIAL INVESTORS, HAS REPORTEDLY AWAKENED, AND SOME HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH GOG OR HAVE SENT EMISSARIES, BUT THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE TO INDICATE THAT IMPROVED INTERNAL ATMOSPHERE AND RECONCILIATION WITH SENEGAL AND IVORY COAST HAVE BEEN SIFFICIENT YET TO ATTRACT THEM BACK. RELATIVE INTERNAL DETENTE HAS ALSO MADE IT EASIER FOR GUINEANS TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY, AND AMONG YOUTH THIS IS MAKING FOR MORE FREQUENT VISITS IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. DESPITE IMPROVEMENTS, GUINEAN BUREAUCRATIC RED TAPE STILL HAMPERS EXILE FINANCIAL, BANKING AND IMPORT TRANSACTIONS, AND IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER GOG IS READY OR WILLING TO EFFECT REFORMS -- BEYOND CURRENT ELIMINATION OF LESSER VARIETIES OF HARASSMENT AND CONTROL -- WHICH WOULD BRING BACK PROFESSIONAL MEN OR SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT. NEXT THREE MONTHS MAY GIVE US CLEARER PICTURE ON THIS. MEANWHILE, NO VIOLATIONS OF RETURNEES' HUMAN RIGHTS DURING LAST QUARTER HAVE COME

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TO OUR ATTENTION, AND IMPRESSION IS THAT GOG IS ON BEST BEHAVIOR, HOPING TO ACCELERATE RETURN OF COMPETENT OR AFFLUENT PRODIGAL SONS.

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